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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 004567

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SUBJECT: JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS IRANIAN COUNTERPART

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura (now Chief Cabinet Secretary) pressed Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Motaki, at a meeting on September 22 in New York, to comply with United Nations sanctions and cease uranium enrichment. Machimura also rejected as "unrealistic" Motaki's proposal that international forces be withdrawn from Iraq so that Iraqis would have the authority to solve their own problems. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Foreign Minister Machimura traveled to New York to attend the High-Level Meetings on Iraq and Afghanistan on the margins of UNGA. While there, he met for 40 minutes the evening of September 22 with Iranian Foreign Minister Motaki. (NOTE: Upon his return to Tokyo, Machimura was elevated to the position of Chief Cabinet Secretary, making him the second highest ranking Japanese official behind the Prime Minister. END NOTE.)

IRANIAN VIEWS ON IRAQ

¶3. (C) FM Motaki wished to discuss the meetings Iranian officials have been having with American counterparts, apparently to convey the impression that the United States is dealing with Iran as an equal, according to a readout provided to Embassy Tokyo Political Officer by MOFA Second Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Motosada Matano. Motaki also explained it is Iran's position in these meetings that the Iraqis need to have the authority to solve their own problems, and that this will only be the case once foreign forces have left Iraq. Machimura replied to Motaki, said Matano, that this notion is totally unrealistic, pointing out that even if the Iraqis do have the will to improve their own security situation, they certainly don't yet have the means to do so.

IRANIAN NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

¶4. (C) FM Machimura's discussion with FM Motaki on the subject of Iran's nuclear program followed the familiar pattern of all previous such discussions, according to Matano. The Iranian argued that Tehran's program is purely for civilian purposes and that it is Iran's right to proceed; Machimura replied that Iran must comply with the will of the international community as expressed in the relevant UNSCRs and cease its uranium enrichment activities before it can expect to earn any credibility. Motaki also tried to

persuade Machimura that because the IAEA has now agreed with Iran on a way forward, Iran's nuclear program is no longer a matter for the Security Council. Machimura rejected this, replying that while cooperation between Iran and the IAEA is a positive development, it is not enough to convince the international community of Iran's intentions against the backdrop of its 18 years of secret nuclear developments. "To regain the confidence of the international community, Iran must cease its uranium production activities and accept the timetable proposed by the P-3 plus one," Machimura told Motaki.

¶5. (C) Machimura also rebuffed arguments by Motaki that Iran has complied with many IAEA requirements for disclosure and inspections by pointing out Iran's cooperation with the IAEA pales in comparison with what Japan had to go through before it was allowed to pursue its civilian nuclear program, said Matano. "Japan has a long history of cooperating with the IAEA prior to and since the development of our peaceful nuclear program," said Machimura, as recounted by Matano. "Iran has done none of these things."

¶6. (C) As the meeting came to an end, Motaki complained that Japan is not being friendly enough with Iran, in that it is simply following the position of other countries and not taking its own, independent position. Machimura replied that of all countries, Japan has the biggest conscience with regard to nuclear power, and that the position followed by Japan toward Iran on this issue is not simply shared with a few western powers. Rather, it is the position of the whole international community, as expressed through the Security Council, a position that Iran needs to begin to take seriously.

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¶7. (C) In a final effort to elicit Japanese support, Motaki reminded Machimura that Iran had supported Japan's candidate to be Secretary General of UNESCO, Japan's candidate to lead the WHO, the G-4 proposal - which includes Japan - for Security Council reform, and acceded to Japan's desire earlier in the day to include favorable language in the Afghanistan High-Level Meeting Communique ("even though this was just a small matter.") (See septel.) "We have been kind enough to do this" concluded Motaki, "so please try to support us." Machimura simply thanked Motaki for the meeting, which then concluded.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) Japan's views toward the Iranian nuclear issue have always been fairly clear, and in numerous meetings at high levels Japanese officials have told Iranian counterparts that Iran needs to comply with the UNSCRs. But the tone taken by Machimura, as recounted by Matano, seems a bit harsher and more direct than was the case with former Foreign Minister Aso, who enjoyed a fairly amicable relationship with Motaki. To be certain, Motaki and Machimura seemed to get along fine, even bantering back and forth. (According to Matano, after Machimura stated Japan's position on uranium enrichment, Motaki replied in Japanese "wakarimasu" ("I understand") to which Machimura rejoined, "good, then we have a done deal!" Motaki then joked that he had learned from his years in Japan that "'wakarimasu' means 'I understand,' not 'I agree.'") But the Iranians were probably stung by Machimura's forcefulness, as well as Japan's ultimately successful campaign to overcome Iranian objections to language Tokyo sought in the Afghanistan communique (septel). Finally, in the UN context, Iran and Japan are becoming direct rivals as both are seeking election from the Asia Group for a nonpermanent seat on the Security Council. Nevertheless, we expect Motaki will probably take another run at newly appointed Foreign Minister Komura who, we anticipate, will deliver the same reply that Machimura did.

